N°. I.

THE

THESPIAN MIRROR.

SATURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 1805.

To the Public.

" To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
" To raise the genius and to mend the heart,
" To make mankind in conscious virtue bold,
" Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold;
" For this the Tragic muse first trod the stage,
" Commanding tears, to stream thro' ev'ry age,
" Tyrants no more their savage nature kept,
" And foes to virtue, wonder'd how they wept!"

POPE.

IN presenting the present sheet to the enlightened citizens of NEW-YORK, as a specimen in matter and manner of a work which on sufficient encouragement will be issued in this metropolis, the EDITOR would observe that it is proposed to comprehend a collection of interesting documents relative to the STAGE, and its performers; chiefly intended to promote the interests of the AMERICAN DRAMA, and to eradicate false impressions respecting the nature, objects, design and tendency of THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS.

It cannot be denied that the STAGE, is calculated for purposes, at once, the most laudable and useful. From its glowing and impressive representations, the Tyrant is induced to relax his wonted severity, the hand of Avarice is opened to the generous influence of Benevolence; the wantonness of the profligate, is succeeded by philosophic thoughtfulness; the asperity of Misanthropy is softened.

into charity and cheerfulness; the conscience of the criminal is struck to repentance, and those absurdities and follies which pervade the

"*Living manners as they rise,*"

and are not immediately cognizable by the criminal or canon laws, are made to shrink and retire before the lash of dramatic satire:

"*Safe from the bar, the pulpit and the throne,*
"*Yet touch'd and sham'd by ridicule alone!*"

Under these impressions, the EDITOR of the *THESPIAN MIRROR*, ventures to present his work to the public eye; and though it comes forward unintroduced, and without any other recommendation, than its own merits, he is induced to hope, that the little stranger will be received with civility, judged with candor, and, (if consistent with its deserts) be rewarded by the cheerful beams of public patronage.

Having said thus much, the EDITOR, respectfully submits the publication, and its plan, to the candid examination of the community at large, anticipating, (while he espouses the cause of the STAGE, as the epitome of men and manners, and the teacher of virtue and morality,) his reward in the encouraging patronage of the citizens of NEW-YORK, to whom the publication is respectfully dedicated, by

THE EDITOR.

Selected.

REMARKS ON THE THEATRE.

IF the observation which has been frequently made, be a just one, that "*nothing has a more considerable and immediate influence upon the manners of a people than the turn which public amusements take among them,*" it will constitute, we think, a strong argument in behalf of a THEATRE. For whilst *the exhibitions of the stage* are capable of giving the most exquisite entertainment, they forcibly convey the most important instruction to a rational audience; and are therefore agreeable and useful schools of refined manners, of generous and manly sentiment, of pru-

dent and virtuous conduct. To deny that this is really the case, would be obstinate prejudice. The sages of Greece and Rome, and the enlightened of latter times, in their encomiums on the Drama, have justified the assertion. *Experience* has done more—it has exemplified it.

Let us but recollect the *offices* and *ends* of the Drama, its pretensions and purposes, and we shall not hesitate in forming a true judgment of its merit. Its first endeavour is *to touch the heart*; its next *to mend it*. For the former purpose, a polished diction and an elevation of sentiment, are extremely necessary: to effect the latter, propriety of fable, interesting situation, variety of character, and, above all, *morality of lesson*, are essentially requisite. These are perfections which the *poet* will furnish. It will be the business of the *actor*, by the vivid force of representation, to give them a peculiar influence over the mind.

It is well known, that in *dramatic exhibitions*, of all others, the human genius has opportunities of exerting and displaying itself, in the most agreeable, the most engaging light, and perhaps to the greatest advantage. In them all the powers of oratory, all the variety of expression of which action or language are capable, and all the graces of delivery, are to be displayed. From the *stage*, where ROSCIUS exercised all the energies of rhetoric, the *suaviter in modo*, and the *fortiter in re* CICERO caught that animated manner of composition and elocution, to which he owed his *fame* and its immortality.

According to Aristotle, the *epic poem* is purely an imitation; whereas the *dramatic* is action itself. The former imitates by narration, the latter rises into actual existence, kindles into forcible life, and is the very story it would represent. Its general business, among the ancients, was the instruction of mankind. The dignity of its original institution it still maintains. *Prodesse et delectare* is still its grand characteristic. And without saying too much of *a well regulated Theatre*, we may safely affirm that, in no other school are *moral sentiment* and *refined manners* more emphatically enforced; or *vice* and *folly* more effectually discountenanced. Its scenes give a finished display of life and manners; and exhibit in the most amiable dress, in representations the most affecting, all the dignity which *manly virtue* gives to the human character, and the honour and happiness with which it rewards its possessor. Moral goodness is rendered familiar to us, and appears truly amiable when set before us in such an affecting and engaging manner. As a good picture strikes the mind with greater force, and gives a more lively idea of the object represented by it than any description by words can do, so, to represent propriety of behaviour in precepts does not move the affections so powerfully as when we see it delineated in example. Narration is frequently unaffecting. Didactic discourse, cold and uninteresting. But where character is personified, and historical events exhibited, attention will be captivated, and a communication for virtuous sentiment opened to the heart. The great maxims of happiness so recommended to mankind, by introducing them thus adorned with all the graces of description, eloquence and poetry, cannot fail of interesting, and making a deep and lasting impression on the mind. We insensibly learn to form just and impartial opinions of human life. Every amiable affection, every human feeling, every generous sentiment is called forth, and cherished in the breast. On the *theatre*, also, the turpitude and deformity of *vice* are so strikingly represented, and so severely lashed, that the spectator shrinks with horror from its view, and is most effectually warned and taught to escape its dominion. The painful lessons of experience are spared. Prudence and wisdom are learned from the wretched consequences of guilt, there painted and described.

More particularly in the *catastrophe*, where the poet and actor exert their utmost stretch of ability to rouse every feeling of the audience, are the passions excited, and *improved*, the mind filled with the most noble ideas, and the heart awakened to the most generous emotions.

It is said that by these means, that eminent tyrant, Alexander of *Pheræa*, who had passed his life in an uninterrupted series of cruelties, without commiseration and without remorse, was melted into tears at the exhibition of a tragedy, where the effects of calamity on the mind of the sufferer were expressly set forth before his imagination. His heart was made to feel a kindly pity; and gradually softened into a tender regret for the misery in which his own ambition and barbarity had involved others. Charmed with the noble sentiments of the poet, and affected by the pathetic description, accent and gesture of the actor, he felt, perhaps for the first time, with high delight, the sweet emotions which sympathy excites.

If *scenic representations* could inspire a tyrant with the tender sensibilities annexed to humanity and benevolence: such as are less deficient in feeling, they may encourage in goodness and strengthen in virtue, such as are equally insensible they will have a tendency to mollify and reclaim.

"As a perfect *Tragedy*," says the elegant *Addison*, "is the noblest production of human nature, so it is capable of giving the mind one of the most delightful, *and most improving* entertainments. Diversions of this kind wear out of our thoughts every thing that is mean and little. They cherish and cultivate that humanity which is the ornament of our nature. They soften insolence, soothe affliction, and subdue the mind to the dispensations of Providence. It is no wonder, therefore, that in all the polite nations of the world, this part of the drama has met with public encouragement"

Nor is *Comedy* unimportant, or uninteresting. Designed to shew the inconveniencies arising from imprudent conduct, and irregular sallies of passion, to ridicule the follies and vices which fashion may have introduced, or habit and pride sanctioned, and to represent the true source of private enjoyments from social affections, from the judicious choice of acquaintance and from amiable and discreet conduct; it would also direct in the conduct of life, and form the mind to virtue.

We shall now beg leave to conclude the subject for the present saying with Horace, of the *Actor*:

"Ille——
—— meum cui pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,
Ut magus; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis."

"'Tis he who gives my breast a thousand pains,
Can make me feel each passion that he feigns;
Enrage, compose, with more than magic art,
With pity and with terror tear my heart;
And snatch me, o'er the earth, as thro' the air,
To Thebes, to Athens, when he will, or where."

POPE

Original.

Some Account of the Life of Mr. FENNEL, *the celebrated Tragedian.*

DESCENDED from a family of the first respectability, in London, Mr. FENNEL recieved a liberal education, and was originally intended for the pursuit of the law: but a strong predilection for the *stage*, induced him early to resign his BLACKSTONE for the more attractive pages of SHAKSPEARE: and his theatrical passion being indulged without the consent of his friends, whose prejudices were equally invincible on the one side, as his on the other, he selected *Edinburgh* as being distant from his residence, for his first theatrical essay, where he performed in 1787, the parts of Jaffier, Othello, &c. with great applause, and under the assumed name of *Camoray*.

Mr. FENNEL's great and unexpected success at Edinburgh, induced him to contemplate a successful reception at London, to which place he soon after returned. On his arrival here, he called on Mr. HARRIS (without introduction of any kind)....but having opened his business, and recited a few passages of dramatic compositions before this gentleman, Mr. HARRIS was so highly gratified by these specimens of his ability, that a night was immediately fixed for his *debut* at *Covent Garden*, where he ran through his principal characters with much success; but still retaining his fictitious name.

The increasing fame of Mr. FENNEL, induced the manager of the Edinburgh Theatre to wish his return to their stage, where he had proceeded, and played there some time with approbation, till one evening being announced to perform the character of Jaffier, and the gentleman who had formerly represented it (Mr. Wood) was fixed for Pierre; but enraged at the exchange, though the characters have ever been deemed equally good, Mr. Wood complained of the injustice of the manager (probably from motives of envy to Mr. Fennel) to his friends. Loaded with invectives by the Plebeian critics of the town, he was called upon to make an humiliating apology, which he would not submit to; a law case ensued on both sides, which lasted a long time, but was of more *expence* to all parties, than *profit* to any....if we may except the *lawyers*.

Immediately after this singularly infamous affair, Mr. FENNEL quitted the stage in that city with indignation, and played a short time at York, but in 1789, he returned to London, where he resumed his situation for one season, (but without the expected success) at Covent Garden. He afterwards engaged in a periodical publication, called the "Theatrical

Guardian," and produced a comedy entitled "Lindel and Clara, or a Trip to Gibraltar;" which has been frequently performed, and was printed 1791.

Not long after this, Mr. FENNEL was engaged by the late Mr. WIGNELL, at his *New Theatre* in Philadelphia, and met with great success. He has since performed at the various Theatres on the continent; but, for some reasons unknown to us, (a circumstance to be lamented by all lovers of the drama) Mr. FENNEL, about two years ago, took leave of the stage, and has since appeared only occasionally. He is now engaged in an extensive establishment of *Salt Works*, the plan of manufacturing which, he has brought to great perfection.

Mr. FENNEL's deportment is graceful....his person majestic....his face admirably calculated for the stage....his action easy and judicious....his utterance distinct and natural.....he excels in the more weighty characters of the Drama; his master piece is "OTHELLO, *Moor of Venice.*" His manners are polished, and his understanding refined.

Mr. FENNEL's residence is near New-London. He is now on a visit to this city, and we are happy to hear that he has been prevailed upon to run through his principal dramatic characters in a few days, on our stage.

The American Stage.

*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.....*Cicero.
The Imitation of Life...the Mirror of Manners...the Representation of Truth

THEATRICAL REGISTER.

"'Tis with our judgments, as our watches....none
"Go just alike,...but each believe his own.

IN commencing a critical and impartial register of the performances of the NEW-YORK THEATRE, we would observe that our remarks shall be generous in spirit, and judicious as our understanding will allow; not directed to the feeling of individuals, (as is too often the case in essays of this nature) much less to the injury of the establishment: but always endeavoring to interest and improve, we shall strive to be generally candid, and only

Blame where we *must*—*praise* where we *can.*

This premised, we shall commence our review with a sketch of the entertainments for the week last past, when an additional evening was allotted for performance, on account of the customary holidays, at this season of the year.

The amusements for MONDAY EVENING, introduced to the notice of the New York audience, Mr. and Mrs. YOUNG, from the Theatre Royal, Norwich, (England) and late of the *Boston Theatre;* for which occasion the admired opera of the MOUNTAINEERS, was got up with considerable success.

We have heard that on a sudden illness of Mr. COOPER, in the Boston Theatre, when this play was announced for representation, Mr. YOUNG offered himself as a substitute for his part, and indeed took it, at an half hour's notice. When he came forward, he was received as Mr. COOPER, and during the whole of the second act, was supposed to be the American ROSCIUS. It had now circulated among the audience, that an apology had been made for COOPER's non-appearance, previous to the rise of the curtain, before the company was collected, and that Mr. Young was the *Octavian* of the evening! The surprise of the spectators was great:—but their admiration of the actor's ability was greater.

We quote this little occurrence only to exemplify that Mr. YOUNG's personation of Octavian was there supposed little inferior to Mr. COOPER's, as this gentleman had, not a long time before, represented the same character on the same boards.

The house on Monday Evening was crouded, and if we may judge from the approbation expressed, generally gratified. On the appearance of *Octavian* the applause was great. Mr. YOUNG has some very striking attitudes, which he displays with much grace. His voice is bad, and his utterance too precipitate. His person is very well calculated for the stage; and he possesses requisites for an actor, which, with due practice and attention, may procure him eminence. Those parts of *Octavian* which require the most energy, such as the introductory soliloquy, the interview with Floranthe, &c. were particularly deserving, but in declamatory speaking, Mr. YOUNG is faulty. It must, however, be allowed, that his performance on this occasion, discovered much talent.

We have now to notice Mrs. YOUNG, a promising actress, who made her *debut* in *Agnes*. We are told that she is yet a *noviciate* under the banners of the Thespian Muse, and as such she is certainly deserving of every encouragement.

Mrs. JOHNSON as *Floranthe* could do no otherwise than well:—the other parts were generally respectable.

The SPOIL'D CHILD, as the after-piece, gratified us with *Little Pickle* by Mrs JONES; who in that character, to use a common phrase, "*fairly out shown herself.*" We can say nothing of the *particular beauties* of her performance, where the whole was indescribably charming.

Old Pickle, by Mr. HOGG, was perfectly characteristic, and *Tagg the Author*, by Mr. MARTIN, was meritorious.

TUESDAY EVENING.

The Counry Girl, and Harlequin's Invasion.

It is always a pleasing task to give merit its due commendation; and still more satisfactory, to be warranted in frequent encomia. We are confident that if praise is due to any one on the American Stage, Mrs.

JONES is among the first who deserve it; and on no former occasion, has she given more pleasure, than in her Miss Peggy, on Tuesday evening.

This character represents a rural *Country Girl*, possessed of native archness, but unrefined manners, with whom an old reformed rake is in love. She promises him her hand, and he carries her before marriage, to visit the British metropolis. On her emerging from the simple scenes of nature, to which she had been accustomed, into the gaiety of LONDON, she is struck with the novelty of the scenes around her, and at length meets a young man, for whom a mutual attachment is conceived, and the event terminates (after much incidental intrigue) in the conclusion of a marriage between the lovers. There is a similar counterplot, which concludes nearly in the same manner.

It is in parts like the *Country Girl*, that Mrs. JONES excels; and we speak the opinion of the audience, in observing that we should never wish to see Miss *Peggy* better played, even could it be excelled.

Mr. JOHNSON's *Moody*, was very characteristic.

Mr. TYLER, in *Harcourt*, was perfectly at home. MARTIN's *Sparkish*, particularly the drunken scene, was very well; but we thought it somewhat overdone.

Mrs. VILLERS' *Alathea* excited much applause; we cannot but regard this lady as a valuable acquisition to our stage. Miss WHITE was respectable.

THURSDAY EVENING.

George Barnwell, and Blue Beard,

We have before observed, that in those passages of Drama, expressive of the strongest passions, Mr. YOUNG's chief excellence consisted; consequently, that part of this interesting tragedy which represents *Barnwell*, after being hurried into the extreme of vice by the arts of *Milwood*, struggling whether to complete his infamy by the murder of his uncle, which he afterwards effects, received more particular force in his hands. We were happy to observe that the applause was so general.

We are always gratified to witness the annunciation of Mrs. JOHNSON, because we are always confident of entertainment from her: her MARIA increased our favorable sentiments of her talents.

Mrs. BARRET has a fault in her performance s, which is, we believe, peculiar to herself....that of speaking with tedious deliberation. We are of opinion, that a little care will correct this, which she may be assured, will add much to her playing, which is, in other respects, very good. *Milwood* was well treated in her hands.

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